

LITERACY NEWS – NORTH AMERICAN AREA  
RI LITERACY RESOURCE GROUP  
August 1,2005

The primary audience for this newsletter is the literacy resource team consisting of the zone literacy coordinators, the district literacy coordinators, and the club literacy chairs or coordinators.

**This Year's Problems, Opportunities, and Plan**

Literacy is one of President Carl-Wilhelm Stenhammar's two top programming priorities for this year. The primary problem we are asked to help solve is that of an adult who is functionally illiterate. In other words, we are asked to intervene at the childhood level to prevent children from becoming adults who cannot read, write, do basic arithmetic or use a computer. And we are asked to step forward to do remedial work with adults who for whatever reason are functionally illiterate.

Beyond the primary problem lie a plethora of literacy problems that wait for action by Rotary. Character development and ethical literacy is one example. Health literacy is another. Educational excellence is a third. These secondary problems offer service project opportunities for clubs that have resources left over after tackling the primary literacy problems.

In Anaheim last February the incoming class of district governors spent some time discussing literacy concerns which they thought their clubs should address. Their list included ( 2005-06 Literacy Resource Group, *Information Paper*):

1. Family literacy and early childhood education: Educating parents about the importance of their role in the early development of their children.
2. Primary education: Improving the quality of primary education and access to suitable facilities and learning materials.
3. Adult education: Improving the practical literacy skills adults need to hold a job, manage a household, or fulfill the responsibilities of a citizen.
4. Workplace literacy: Improving the skills required to successfully perform one's job.
5. Literacy for women: Improving the opportunities for women to learn in environments where economic and social conditions impede their learning.

Continuity is another priority of President Carl. This means that the zone, district and club literacy coordinators should do their part to share information with the 2006-2007 club and district leadership. It is even appropriate to inform the 2007-2008 class of district governors. KUDOS in this regard go to several of our zone literacy coordinators who communicate not only with the 2005-06 leadership but also the 2006-07 DGs. Zone 29 literacy coordinator Janice Young, for example, started doing this last April.

Under the leadership General Coordinator Eileen Gentilcore and Assistant General Coordinator Lloyd Whitfield, the RI Literacy Resource Group has developed a plan to address these problems and opportunities. The role of this newsletter in that plan is to keep up the stream of communication from the zones to the districts to the clubs and back.

### **New Brochure, Resource List and Project Ideas Get New Year Off to a Fast Start**

Literacy project planning is off to a fast start in North America. Zone literacy coordinators credit that fine showing to the early preparation and dissemination of literacy resource materials. Any reader who has not seen the basic package of materials can find it now on President Carl's website. Just go to [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org). Then click on the president's home page. Once there click on the group option. The page that opens will list three choices, one of which is literacy. Click on literacy and you've arrived at your final destination. Be sure to check out the downloads.

### **Early Returns Show The Rotary Club of Delray Beach Sunrise in the lead for "Best Literacy Month Promotion Project"**

July was Rotary Literacy Month and all clubs were encouraged to engage in some sort of celebration or promotion. The month had not ended when this issue of the newsletter went to press. But the most impressive club activity reported to date was the "Rota Read-A-Thon" conducted by the Rotary Club of Delray Beach Sunrise in Southeast Florida.

Under the leadership of incoming club president C. Ron Allen, here's what the Delray Beach Rotarians did:

1. On the first Friday of the month club members and city officials read to more than 300 kids at three different locations. The club signed up several other community organizations to participate in the project. The mayor and county board issued supporting proclamations and the local press gave full coverage to the event.
2. The following Friday parents were urged to turn off their television sets and read to their children. Each participating child was given a book to take home for this purpose.
3. The third Friday of July the kids gathered at the city library for a reading session with community celebrities ( many of them Rotarians).
4. The fourth Friday the children were treated to a literacy field trip

President C. Ron is preparing a "how to do it" report that will be available to all clubs in North America by the end of August. He says this project is very meaningful for the children and their parents. He tells us that this is an easy to do project. It is also rewarding to the participating Rotarians, and a great way to make the community more aware of Rotary's commitment to literacy. Most of the participating children fell into the "at-risk" category.

Zone literacy coordinator Steve Laine deserves special mention in regard to the Delray success. Last March Steve visited with C. Ron Allen and challenged him to come up with a noteworthy project for July. Steve knows his local talent pool well. C. Ron took the challenge and ran with it.

And here's an important reminder. Our job is not only to promote projects for this Rotary year but also to provide early education for next year's Rotary leadership. So perhaps the groups most in need of learning about the Delray experience are next year's DGs and club presidents. Let's be sure the 2006-07 hear from us all year. Consider it part of their training.

Look for more information on this and other club literacy month projects in next month's newsletter. **AND REMEMBER – MANY OF THE PROJECT EXAMPLES FROM LITERACY MONTH WOULD APPLY TO INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY (September 8<sup>th</sup>).**

### **The Dictionary Project**

Last March the RI Literacy Resource Group chose The Dictionary Project as a so-called "signature project." In other words, this is a literacy project that all clubs in the world are being asked to consider doing.

A significant number of clubs have been doing this project for several years. But the majority of clubs have yet to participate. So the goal for this year is to increase the participation rate.

All of our North American zone literacy resource coordinators are promoting this project. And they are already showing impressive results. Zone 34 coordinator Steve Laine hit the jackpot. His communications motivated district literacy coordinator Betsy Owen to get the endorsement of the project by the Palm Beach (Florida) Superintendent of Schools.

The effort in North America has been made immensely easier by the participation of Oklahoma Rotarian Stan Dixon. Last year Stan came close to achieving his goal of having every club in District 6110 do The Dictionary Project (all but three of the seventy plus clubs do the project now. And those three can't do it because a different organization is already covering their communities).

In the process of lining up his district's clubs Stan put together an easy-to-follow brochure and a support process complete with a web site. Stan has made his materials available to any district or club in North America. To take advantage of his offer, contact him at:

[Info@RotaryLiteracy.com](mailto:Info@RotaryLiteracy.com) or view his website at [www.RotaryLiteracy.com](http://www.RotaryLiteracy.com)

DISTRICT LEADERS – HERE IS A SPECIAL OFFER FOR YOU -Stan has a standing offer to provide your district with enough start-up brochures for every one of your clubs. In July his offer was taken up by zone literacy coordinators Ann Williams (Zone 31), Steve Laine (Zone 34), Lee Ahlum (Zone 28) and Bill Mickelberry (Zone 23). Ann, Steve, Lee and Bill then forwarded the brochures to their DGs for distribution to the clubs.

Most educators agree that the third grade is the best place to introduce The Dictionary Project. But there are some alternatives. A Rotary club in Griffin, Georgia, for example, conducts an eighth grade dictionary project.

### **The August Promotion of the Month – Hospitals**

Every month the RI Literacy Resource Group will ask your club to consider doing a literacy project related to a specific theme. At a minimum the club is asked to take three actions. **First**, announce the theme to the club members and ask them to suggest projects which fit the theme. **Second**, appeal to the members to put service above self and volunteer to organize a project related to the theme. **Third**, share your ideas with your district literacy resource chair and your assistant district governor. Or send your ideas directly to your zone coordinators. The ideas you generate this year might become projects promoted nationwide next year. **Generating new ideas from the local clubs is the name of this game.**

A script that can be used as the club announcement for the August promotion can be found at the literacy page on the website of zones 29-30. The address is:  
[www.rizones29-30.net](http://www.rizones29-30.net).

Books for Babies is one simple but effective project related to hospitals. In its simplest form the sponsoring club presents the mother of each newborn child with a book and some literature explaining why and how to read to the new child. Variations of this project can be found around the country. One of the finest programs is that conducted by the Rotary Club of Auburn (Alabama) in District 6880. Contact immediate past club president Christopher Rodger at [rodgecl@auburn.edu](mailto:rodgecl@auburn.edu) or try the Georgia Public Library's "Books for Babies" website:

[www.georgialibraries.org/lib/child/BFB/start.html](http://www.georgialibraries.org/lib/child/BFB/start.html)

That site contains background information for project organizers, a list of recommended list, and instructions for parents.

Zone 22 literacy coordinator Irwin Stewart reports that a number of clubs in District 5020 conduct either Books for Babies or a similar program called Born to Read. Detailed information on the Born to Read program can be found on the web site of the American Library Association-Association for Library Service to Children:

[www.ala.org/ala/alsc/alscpubs/borntoreadprod/borntoreadproducts.html](http://www.ala.org/ala/alsc/alscpubs/borntoreadprod/borntoreadproducts.html)

Emergency Medical Information Kits for Seniors: Zone literacy coordinator Steve Laine brings this one to your attention. District 6990 which covers the Miami, Florida area, has made programs for the elderly a major focus. The district even has a website covering their programs ([www.rotaryelderprogram.org](http://www.rotaryelderprogram.org)). One of their projects relates to the following problem – An elderly person who lives alone needs emergency care. The ambulance arrives to take the person to the hospital but the patient is unable to provide the necessary medical information. The solution developed by the Rotarians was to prepare emergency medical information kits which each senior can attach to the home refrigerator. Then, when the ambulance arrives, the driver or attendant picks up the emergency kit. Now both the ambulance crew and the hospital personnel have the information they need to give the patient proper care. The project requires partnering with churches and other organizations that can identify and contact the seniors in need of this support.

Projects focused on nursing homes fit the August theme. Once again District 6990 provides an inspirational example. The so-called “DaVinci Project” of the Rotary Club of Miami Shores sponsors students who go to a local nursing home and serve as teachers for the elderly. Rotarian Herta Holly, vice mayor of the Village of Miami Shores has offered to assist other Rotary clubs in starting such a project. Contact her through the D-6990 Rotary Elder Program director Jack Martin ([jmartin@rotaryelderprogram.org](mailto:jmartin@rotaryelderprogram.org))

Zone 32 literacy resource coordinator Jack Tartamella participated in a similar but simpler project worth mentioning. Here’s the rest of the story in his own words - “ My wife, Joyce, while teaching 3<sup>rd</sup> grade... had the children write letters to many residents of the Victory Lake Nursing Home. Our governor at that time was the administrator and informed us that most of the residents rarely, if ever, received mail or visits. Joyce and I took the letters from the children to the home and distributed them, spending a little time with each resident. We heard amazing life stories of these people and they loved the visit, the attention, the letters and just knowing that someone cares... Some of the students asked if they could visit the home... They and their families did. We learned later that some of the relationships that developed continued and more visits were made ... All of us learned that ...nursing home residents need and deserve our attention and in return we are blessed by them enriching our lives.” While not a Rotary project, this story illustrates how your club could launch a simple version of the D-6990 DaVinci program.

Healthcare Directory: As noted above, an appropriate topic for the August literacy program is healthcare information. Consider the Healthcare Directory project co-sponsored by the Rotary Club of Dayton. Partnering with 8 other area agencies the Dayton club placed self-standing, touch screen kiosks in locations throughout the local area. The kiosks were linked to a website with a plethora of health care information ([www.rotaryhealthlinks.org](http://www.rotaryhealthlinks.org)). Persons without health insurance and not knowing where to turn, go to a kiosk and find out where to go to solve a full range of health problems. To

find out more about this program, contact the Dayton Rotary Club at [info@RotaryHealthLinks.com](mailto:info@RotaryHealthLinks.com).

Finally, early childhood literacy programs are covered by the August promotion. North American Area Zone Literacy Coordinators are scheduled to provide examples during the month. Zone 24 zone literacy coordinator Lisa Foster will be our source. Lisa's classification is early childhood education. She is passionate about this topic.

### **International Literacy Day – September 8<sup>th</sup>**

All clubs are being asked to participate in the celebration of International Literacy Day. Rotary has a special obligation to do so as a result of a partnership agreement we signed with the International Reading Association. The North American Area is encouraging clubs to make the celebration the theme for the club's regular meeting during the week of September 8<sup>th</sup>. And we are encouraging the clubs to make the celebration the occasion for recognizing a local literacy leader. For example, last September the Rotary Club of Macomb (Illinois) celebrated International Literacy Day by presenting a Literacy Leader of the Year Award. It was presented to the town's librarian. All district governors should have received information about this project from their zone literacy coordinators. You can also find that information on the website of zones29-30. Go to [www.rizones29-30.net](http://www.rizones29-30.net) and visit the literacy page.

Celebration of International Literacy Day doesn't have to be restricted to a club program. All clubs are encouraged to look for additional ways to serve and celebrate. For example, a club might participate in a workshop sponsored by the local literacy coalition. At least one club plans to deliver dictionaries to the schools on September 8<sup>th</sup>.

### **The Other September Literacy Focus – Adopt-A-School Programs for Youth At-Risk**

The North American Area of the RI Literacy Resource Group has selected five topics for special emphasis – Literacy Month (July), The Dictionary Project, International Literacy Day, Adopt-A-School Programs for youth at-risk and Character Development (The October theme of the month).

Adopt-A-School programs for youth at-risk range from simple to complex. At the simple end the local club provides some simple service or product to a school with a high percentage of at-risk children. The club could provide Rotarians who go to the school to read with at-risk students for an hour a week. The club could provide books (or dictionaries). The club could provide school supplies. Here are some examples of simple programs:

1. From Zone 25 Literacy Resource Coordinator George Wheeler – The *Read To Me* program. The Wheat Ridge Rotary Club (Colorado) initiated this project. The club provides a classroom with books that the children can take home and read with their parents. Thirty books are provided. They are rotated from student to

student so that at the end of the school year each child has read thirty books at home with a parent. The kits are available to any club in North America. The program costs \$200 a classroom for the first year. To find out more, contact Rotarian Jerry Watson at 303-238-2150 or [jwatson3390@netzero.net](mailto:jwatson3390@netzero.net).

2. Also from George Wheeler – *The Imagination Library*- This one is endorsed by Dolly Partin and is a bit pricey but worth it. Contact your zone literacy coordinator for details.
3. From Zone 23 Literacy Resource Coordinator Bill Mickelberry – *The Newspapers in Education Program* – This program works with your local newspaper to provide a current events textbook ( the newspaper) for a school classroom. For additional information check the literacy page on the zones 29-30 website ([www.rizones29-30.net](http://www.rizones29-30.net)).

Complex Adopt-A-School programs require a more substantial amount of time, cash and psychological commitment. Zone 22 Literacy Resource Coordinator Irwin Stewart recently provided an excellent example from Winnipeg, Canada in District 5550. The project was called the “Pathways Pilot Project”. It attacked two literacy problems – at-risk youth and adult literacy. The Selkirk Rotary club partnered with a local school and local educational experts to target a group of children from poor families.

Two features made this project especially noteworthy. First, it targeted a population of children (and adults) for which public agencies had operated intervention programs for years. For some reason, this population was still not being reached effectively. Second, academic research methods were used to “scientifically” evaluate the results. The result was a 27 page final report. For clubs interested in a challenging project this might be the answer. For a copy of the report and contact information contact the North American Area Literacy Resource Group Coordinator, Richard Hattwick at

[richardhattwick@bellsouth.net](mailto:richardhattwick@bellsouth.net).

The Denver Mile High Rotary Club is working on a similar project with a similar insight. District 5450 Literacy Coordinator Patricia Fiske reports that the club is working on an Adopt-a-School model that can be used throughout North America to reach those hard to save at-risk youth. Patricia’s zone literacy coordinator, George Wheeler, is following this project and should have more information in time for the next newsletter.

Finally district literacy coordinator Judith Cochran is working an a university based K-12 Adopt-A-School model that can also be adopted nationwide. Dr. Cochran is an education professor at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. We are anxious to learn more about her project. You can contact her at [CochranJu@msx.umsl.edu](mailto:CochranJu@msx.umsl.edu).

### **Adopt-a-School for Excellence and Access for Disadvantaged But Gifted Youth**

Because of the priority of dealing with illiteracy, this month's newsletter will not devote much space to the goal of promoting excellence. However, there are numerous examples of Rotary projects in this area. Among them are spelling bees, high school scholastic bowls, scholarships and teacher recognition. There is room here for projects that deal with a special kind of child-at-risk – the young person who has a gift, but a gift that is not likely to be realized because of a disadvantaged home environment. You'll hear more about these next month.

### **And Don't Forget the Adults-at-Risk**

Hard as society works to "leave no child behind" there continue to be adults with literacy problems. Some are immigrants with a second language issue; others are school drop-outs. A number of Rotary clubs address this issue by partnering with the adult literacy program of the local school district or not-for-profit agency. The Rotarians usually provide financial support, serve as readers, and provide labor for various other tasks.

The Literacy Resource Group's database for this topic is currently thin. But, thanks to zone coordinator Steve Laine we do have a helpful report from the March 18, 2004 Presidential Celebration on Literacy held in Macon, Georgia. We are told that the Rotary Club of La Grange partners with local organizations to promote adult literacy. Rotarians go door-to-door to contact adults in need and make them aware of services available. The club provides scholarships to enable teen mothers to finish their GED. And the club provides members for one-on-one tutoring of adults. The Griffen and Griffen Daybreak clubs have a similar adult literacy project.

### **One Last Word About September – The Zone Institutes and 2006-2007**

September is also the month for zone institutes. The literacy resource group hopes that every institute honors President Carl's literacy priority by including a plenary session speaker on literacy, at least one breakout session on literacy, and a literacy component in the GETS training that precedes the institute. The information shared at the zone institutes can have an impact on the current year's level of literacy programming. BUT THE GREATER IMPACT MAY BE ON THE THINKING OF NEXT YEAR'S LEADERS. Think 2006-07 at zone.

### **Looking Ahead to the Themes for October and November**

The October literacy theme of the month is Character Development and Ethics. This is an opportunity for every district governor, assistant governor and club president to promote Four-Way Test projects. More will be said about this in future newsletters. Readers unable to wait should check out the accomplishments of the Rotary Club of Fort Collins (Colorado). Their website with detailed Four-Way Test project information is:



[www.rotary5440.org/fortcollinsco4waybrochure/](http://www.rotary5440.org/fortcollinsco4waybrochure/) . Or try the Four-Way Test site of District 5810 (Texas) at [www.rotary5810.org/html/4way\\_speech.html](http://www.rotary5810.org/html/4way_speech.html) .

The November literacy theme of the month is The Rotary Foundation and Literacy. This, too, will be covered in detail in future issues of the literacy newsletter. Two of the possible projects that will be highlighted are:

1. A very easy-to-do project to supply books to a school in another country. For a description prepared by battle-hardened zone coordinator Bill Mickelberry go the literacy section of the Zones 29-30 website ( [www.rizones29-30.net](http://www.rizones29-30.net)) and click the download for the “Minilibraries” program. Rotary Foundation grants are used. The contribution of the club is a mere \$280.
2. A much more difficult but highly rewarding project is the CLE (Concentrated Language Encounter). This project originated in Australia and was originally funded with a 3H grant. It has been successfully used in a large number of countries in Asia and Latin America. Clubs can participate by means of a matching grant. CLE is an unorthodox but effective way to achieve literacy fairly quickly in parts of the world where literacy rates are shockingly low. Everything you need to know to get started can be found at [www.cleliteracy.org](http://www.cleliteracy.org).

IN ADDITION, WE WILL BE PROMOTING INVOLVEMENT WITH THE **INTERNATIONAL SAVE THE CHILDREN ALLIANCE**. President Carl has set a goal of working with this network of approximately 30 countries to build 300 schools in developing countries.

**A Final Word From President Carl** ( From *The Rotarian*, July,2005).

“During 2005-2006, we have two major emphases to concentrate on – literacy, along with water, health, and hunger .... Literacy is a huge area *with many needs*. In order to expand our reach on the same penny, I strongly recommend cooperation with other organizations working in the same field ... The years 2003-2012 have been declared the “Decade of Literacy” by the United Nations. Let us participate together in making this decade a success through *Service Above Self*, thus continuing to show the world the great leadership of Rotary International.”